



**Testimony for the NYC Council
Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing**

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

Submitted by Kimberly George, President and CEO, Project Guardianship

Thank you, Chair Brannan and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony today. I am Kimberly George, President and CEO for Project Guardianship. Project Guardianship was founded in 2005 as a social justice initiative of the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera). In partnership with the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA), Vera launched a pilot program called The Guardianship Project to fill a gap in the guardianship and elder services safety net for New Yorkers. In 2020, The Guardianship Project became Project Guardianship, Inc., an independent non-profit organization providing comprehensive, court appointed guardianship services to hundreds of limited capacity New Yorkers citywide. We serve clients regardless of their ability to pay and provide services for some of the most compelling and complex cases in the city. We also share research and recommendations for a better guardianship system and advocate for a more equitable response to providing services for people in need of protective arrangements.

As you may know, New York's aging population is growing rapidly. Across the state more than [3.2 million New Yorkers are over the age of 65](#), and by 2030, nearly one in four New Yorkers will be an older adult. In NYC alone, older adults are projected to reach 1.86 million - or 20.6



percent - of the City's population by 2040. [One-third of older adults identify as Black, Latinx, Asian or non-white](#), and the number of older immigrants statewide is growing at nearly double the rate of U.S.-born older adults. At the same time, nearly 1 in 7 older New Yorkers is living in poverty. Older, lower income adults are at the center of the housing affordability and homelessness crises, [especially older adults of color](#). These older, vulnerable adults are disproportionately impacted by [abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation](#).

Despite increased [state and federal investments directed towards care for aging](#) and disabled New Yorkers, far too many will be denied the opportunity to benefit from these programs because they are physically or cognitively unable to navigate our complex social service network. This is where legal guardianship often steps in. Nonprofit guardianship programs work to secure the public benefits, housing, healthcare, and other supports that this population needs to improve outcomes and promote safety and stability. Our clients include older New Yorkers, those living with serious disability, physical impairments, mental health issues, dementia, substance abuse, Traumatic Brain Injury, and other conditions that negatively impact their ability to make decisions.

Our model has demonstrated how a good guardian can prevent institutionalization and support these populations right in their own communities. Not only do these efforts stimulate the local economy by redirecting this funding back into the community, but guardianship also saves public dollars by decreasing Medicaid spending on unnecessary hospital and nursing



home stays. Mayor Adams has indicated he is committed to reducing ageism and making New York City as age inclusive as possible. As our city recovers from the Coronavirus pandemic and looks to rebuild for the long term, supporting our most vulnerable should be at the top of the priority list in our local budget. As you know, the Council has been critical in supporting guardianship services across our city for years, and we are grateful for that support. As we look ahead to a post pandemic future, we not only seek to restore our current funding, but to partner with you, the larger Council and the administration to shine a spotlight on guardianship and the need for quality guardianship services citywide. We call upon the Council to continue championing older New Yorkers and funding initiatives like Support our Seniors which provides flexible funding streams to organizations supporting older New Yorkers equitably and comprehensively. We also hope to deliver more services to the most vulnerable among us, securing positive outcomes for our older neighbors in housing, healthcare, public benefits and more. The time is now; we must stand ready for the increased need as our city ages. With your continued support, we will be able to meet that need and make New York City the equitable, age inclusive and age friendly place it strives to be, where everyone can fulfill their potential regardless of functional limitations or other challenges.

Thank you.



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Please contact Kimberly George at kgeorge@nycourts.gov with any questions or requests for additional information.